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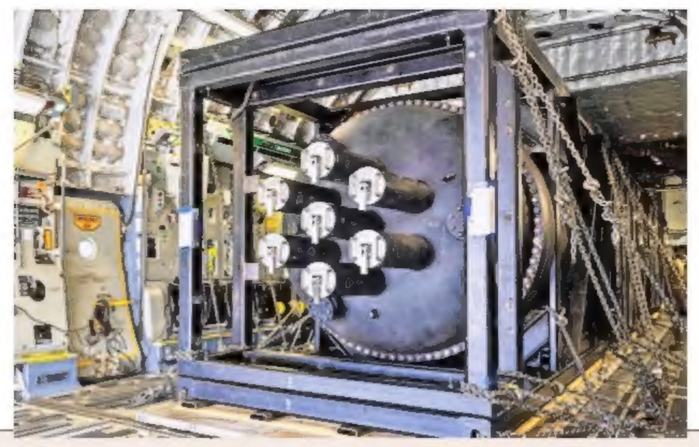

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IN A FIRST, U.S. TRANSPORTS SMALL NUCLEAR REACTOR ON A PLANE

A microreactor was flown on a cargo plane from California to Utah showing nuclear power can be deployed quickly for military and civilian use

CAN HELP U.S. MILITARY IN FAR-FLUNG LOCATIONS

The US departments of energy and defence partnered with private firm Valar Atomics to fly one of the company's microreactors on a C-17 aircraft. "This gets us closer to deploying nuclear power when and where needed to give our warfighters the tools to win," a US official said. Critics have highlighted the challenge of handling the radioactive waste generated

PUSH BY TRUMP TO PROMOTE MICROREACTORS

- The microreactor used in Sunday's Operation Windlord can generate up to 5 megawatts of electricity, enough to power 5,000 homes
- The experiment comes amid plans by Trump administration to promote the manufacturing of small reactors to meet the growing power demand sparked by artificial intelligence and data centres

19%

OF ELECTRICITY GENERATED IN THE U.S. IN 2024 CAME FROM NUCLEAR POWER

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

Shaping solutions for the world

Modi opens India AI Impact Summit; Vaishnaw seeks global consensus on copyrights issue

Being here among innovators, researchers and tech enthusiasts gives a glimpse of the extraordinary potential of AI, Indian talent and innovation

Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

Global platforms like yours (Motion Picture Association) and Netflix should be aware of the cultural context of the country in which they are operating

Ashwini Vaishnaw, minister

Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Sarvam AI stall at the India AI Impact Expo in New Delhi, as Sarvam's co-founder Pratyush Kumar looks on | PTI

RAKESH KUMAR @ New Delhi

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Monday inaugurated the India AI Impact Summit, the largest congregation of AI experts, bringing together heads of state and government, ministers, global technology leaders, researchers, multilateral institutions, and industry stakeholders in Delhi. The five-day summit from February 16 to 20, will deliberate on the role of AI in advancing inclusive growth, strengthening public systems, and enabling sustainable development.

"Inaugurated the India AI Impact Expo 2026 at Bharat Mandapam. Being here among innovators, researchers and tech enthusiasts gives a glimpse of the extraordinary potential of AI, Indian talent and innovation. Together, we will shape solutions not just for India but for the world," said Modi.

In a separate social media post, Modi said the event, which will be attended by OpenAI founder Sam Altman, Google CEO Sundar Pichai, and others, is themed "Sarvajana Hitaya" (happiness for all), reflecting a shared commitment to harnessing Artificial Intelligence for human-centric progress.

He welcomed the dignitaries — over 100 government representatives, including more than 20 heads of state and government and 60 ministers and vice ministers — along with more than 500 global AI leaders comprising CEOs, founders, academicians, researchers, CTOs, and representatives of philanthropic organisations.

Minister of Electronics and IT (MeitY) Ashwini Vaishnaw said India is engaging with industry stakeholders to identify appropriate technical and legal frameworks to ensure that AI does not infringe upon the copyrights of content creators.

During a conversation with US media mogul Charles Rivkin, the minister said India is also seeking global consensus on the copyright issue.

V Anantha Nageswaran, Chief Economic Advisor, said AI adoption cannot happen by drift.It requires commitment to aligning tech progress with mass employability.

Long queues, packed sessions on Day One

The opening day witnessed long queues and packed sessions across the venue. Heavy traffic congestion and confusion at the entry gates left many participants, dignitaries, exhibitors, and speakers stranded outside for extended periods. Several attendees took to social media to express their frustration. While some complained about long waiting times, others flagged the lack of UPI payment facilities at food counters, poor mobile connectivity, and inadequate signage and instructions. VIP security arrangements further compounded the inconvenience, with several areas of the venue cordoned off from 2 pm. The rush was especially visible at the food courts spread across the venue, all of which remained heavily crowded throughout the day

SABARIMALA CASE

9-judge SC bench to hear pleas on religious bias

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Monday said a nine-judge bench will from April 7 begin the final hearing on petitions relating to discrimination against women at religious places, including Sabarimala Temple, and on the ambit of religious freedom.

A three-judge bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi, said, "The nine judge bench shall begin hearing the review case on April 7, 2026 at 10.30 am."

In September 2018, a five-judge Constitution bench, by a 4:1 majority verdict, had lifted the ban that prevented females between 10 and 50 from entering the Ayyappa shrine at Sabarimala in Kerala and held that the Hindu religious practice was "illegal and unconstitutional."

On November 14, 2019, another five-judge bench headed by then Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, by a majority of 3:2, referred the issue of discrimination against women at various places of worship to a larger bench. However, the order was silent on any stay of the September 28, 2018 judgment which allowed entry of women of all age groups to the hilltop shrine in Kerala.

Besides the Sabarimala case, the verdict also referred to issues of entry of Muslim women into mosques and of Parsi women into the holy fire place of an Agiary, to the larger bench.

More than 50 review petitions had been filed urging the Supreme Court not to interfere with religious practices.

The bench said it will look at seven related questions during the hearings, such the scope of the right to freedom of religion, the interplay between rights of persons under Article 25 and rights of religious denominations under Article 26, the scope and extent of the word "morality" under Articles 25 and 26, and whether it includes constitutional morality and scope and extent of judicial review with regard to a religious practice under Article 25. P7

Nodal counsel for both parties

The bench-appointed lawyer Krishna Kumar Singh as nodal counsel for parties supporting the review. It also appointed Shashwati Pari as nodal counsel for those opposing the review

HC sets aside Subbareddy's election as Bagepalli MLA

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

THE Karnataka High Court on Monday set aside the election of Congress MLA **SN Subbareddy** from the Bagepalli Assembly constituency in Chikkaballapur district in 2023.

Partly allowing the election petition filed by C Muniraju, a defeated candidate from BJP, who had questioned the legality of Subbareddy's election, Justice MGS Kamal delivered the verdict. But Justice Kamal stayed the verdict on the request of Subbareddy's counsel to enable them to file an appeal. The copy of the judgment is yet to be available.

Muniraju filed the petition in 2023, seeking to quash Subbareddy's election on the grounds of non-disclosure and false declaration in the election affidavit.

Subbareddy secured 82,128 votes, while Muniraju, who stood second, got 62,949 votes. Muniraju alleged in hit petition that Subbareddy indulged in corrupt practices that fall under Section 123(1) and (2) of the Representation of People's Act.

Subba Reddy has won the Assembly elections thrice in a row from Bagepalli. His first victory was as an independent, while the two previous wins came as a Congress member. He was aiming for a ministerial berth in case of a reshuffle. Both Muniraju and Subbareddy were not available for comments.

Controversial ₹80,000 crore Great Nicobar Project gets NGT green light

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR
@ New Delhi

AFTER a prolonged wait, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Monday cleared the controversial Great Nicobar Project worth ₹80,000 crore, after disposing of the challenges against it.

A six-member special bench of NGT found no substantial grounds to interfere with the mega infrastructure project, observing that adequate safeguards had been incorporated into its environmental clearance.

Conservationists had opposed it, saying it will cause massive ecological damage and threaten tribal communities. The Congress called the NGT clearance "deeply disappointing". Party leader Sonia Gandhi had warned last year that it poses an existential danger to the island's indigenous communities and is being insensitively pushed through by the government.

During the hearing, the special bench recorded that all emerging concerns had been examined and addressed by a high-powered committee tasked with revisiting the project's environmental clearance granted in 2022. "Considering the strategic importance of the project and taking into account the other relevant considerations, we don't find any good ground to interfere," NGT chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava said.

The project is expected to boost India's presence in the Indian Ocean Region amid increasing pressures from foreign powers. The project spans 166 sq km and requires the diversion of 130 sq km of forest land. A transshipment port, along with several associated projects such as a dual-use civil and military airport will be built in the Great Nicobar Island.

TAMING THE OZ

Sri Lanka's Pathum Nissanka celebrates his century during the T20 World Cup cricket match between Sri Lanka and Australia in Pallekele, Sri Lanka, on Monday. Lankans beat the Aussies by 8 wickets to reach Super Eights | PTI | P17

HAMPI HORROR

3 get death penalty for raping 2 tourists, killing 1

RAGHOTTAM KOPPAR @ Koppal

Sharanabasavaraj, Charan Sai and Malla

THE First Additional District and Sessions court here on Monday awarded death penalty to three men for raping two women and murdering an Indian tourist near Sanapur in March last year.

The court found the trio guilty on February 6 and pronounced the quantum of punishment on Monday. Justice Sadanand Nagappa Naik ordered capital punishment to Malla alias Handi Malla, Charan Sai and Sharanabasavaraj.

The incident occurred near the Tungabhadra Left Bank Canal in Sanapur. Five tourists staying at a homestay in Anegundi had gone for a walk after finishing their dinner on March 6, 2025. They went to the left bank canal of Tungabhadra near Sanapur lake and were sitting listening to music when the three assailants came to the spot and created a ruckus with the intention of robbing the tourists.

When the male tourists resisted, the assailants, who were drunk, pushed them into the canal, and raped the two women, an Israeli and an Indian. Two of the three who fell into the waters managed to reach the shore, while the tourist from Odisha drowned after suffering a severe head injury. His body was recovered 24 hours later.

The murdered tourist was identified as Bibhasha from Odisha. Daniel, a German national, and Pankaj from Maharashtra were injured.

FINISHING TOUCHES

Indian team to visit US to fix legal text of trade deal

DIPAK MONDAL @ New Delhi

CHIEF negotiator Darpan Jain will lead a delegation to Washington next week to finalise the legal text of the proposed India–US trade agreement, the Commerce Ministry said on Monday.

Following the joint statement agreed earlier this month, the framework deal is now being converted into a formal legal agreement, said Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal.

"The effort is to see that we can finalise and sign the legal agreement in March 2026," he told reporters when asked about the timeline.

On the proposed reduction in the reciprocal tariff from 25% to 18%, Agrawal said the US is processing the matter and that India expects it to be completed soon. "Our expectation is that it should be done this week. If not, the team will be there next week and we can pursue the matter and understand why it is taking time," he said.

The US has already removed the 25% additional tariff imposed after India agreed not to buy crude from Russia. However, the 25% reciprocal tariff has not yet been reduced to 18%, as agreed by both sides. Overall, the US imposed an additional 50% tariff on Indian goods -- 25% as a reciprocal tariff and another 25% linked to India's oil purchase from Russia. Agrawal said most favoured nation (MFN) tariffs remain unchanged,meaning the effective tariff on Indian goods will be 18% plus MFN rates.

EXPRESS READ

Karnataka notifies 1% social security fee on gig platforms

Bengaluru: The state government has issued a notification mandating collection of a 1% Gig Workers Welfare Fee on payouts made by aggregators under the Karnataka Platform Based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Act, 2025. Capped by vehicle and service category, platforms must remit quarterly payments, funding social security schemes for gig and platform workers statewide | P4

Rlys, KIADB plan to acquire land will hit our livelihood: Farmers

Farmers at Bettahalasur in Bengaluru face a bleak future | SHASHIDHAR BYRAPPA

MOHAMMED YACOOB @Bengaluru

HUNDREDS of farmers in and around Thimmasandra, Bettahalsoor and surroundings in Yelahanka taluk of Bengaluru North are worried as the Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board (KIADB) is planning to acquire 170 acres and the Railway Department has published a notification for around 70 acres for 'development'. The farmers said this would put their livelihoods in danger.

B Nanjundappa, an aged farmer representing the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha, is spearheading the agitation against both state and central governments. He said 6.16 km of the railway line from Rajanukunte to Bettahalasur will run in the middle of 70 acres of fertile and lush green agricultural land. If the governments want to take up development work, they should look at barren land, he argued.

"We don't want any compensation. All we want is to continue to cultivate land and feed people and ourselves. By taking our land, the government wants farmers to become beggars," said a teary-eyed Nanjundappa, gazing at the rose garden and coconut palms on his 2.5-acre land.

Farmers here grow grape (Bengaluru blue), pomegranate, guava, butter fruit, chikoo and papaya; and vegetables like brinjal, potatoes, tomatoes, beans, ridge gourd, bottle gourd, pumpkin, cauliflower, cabbage, carrot and lady's finger. Marigolds and roses are common at Bettahalasur and Thimmasandra.

"Twenty per cent of the crop is kept for families involved in agriculture in the surroundings, and the rest is supplied to the City Market and Yeshwanthpur Market," said Sanath Kumar, a farmer with 2 acres of land. P7